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EUROPEAN FOLK-LORE IN THE UNITED STATES.

THERE is a great deal of folk-lore in the United States, derived from nearly every country in Europe, and belonging to four out of the seven great divisions of the Aryan race: Keltic, Teutonic, Slav, and Latin.

The Keltic and Teutonic divisions are more important, for they are many times larger than the others, and are more accessible to the collector. Kelts and Teutons formed a part of the colonial population of our country, and have been increased by an immigration almost uninterrupted, from the end of the War of Independence to the present day. They are consequently very numerous, and possess much of the material sought for by the Folk-Lore Society. The labors of Dr. Hoffman among Pennsylvanians of German descent and Mr. Mooney's investigations in the field of mythologic medicine among the Irish in Washington and Indiana are sufficient proofs of this.

The Slavs, however, should not be neglected, for the Czechs (Bohemians) and Poles are quite respectable in numbers. The Czechs have a score of newspapers in the United States, and the Poles half as many at least. Both are possessed of a good stock of ancient and interesting beliefs, commonly called superstitions. Especially fortunate are the Poles in this regard, and as a good number of them have congregated in three or four places in the country, they are quite accessible. The proper person would find plenty of folk-lore among them. Buffalo, Chicago, and Milwaukee are the great Polish centres. There are many Czechs in New York and the northern line of large cities, but in particular Chicago, where there are Czech clubs, newspapers, societies, and a very good collection of Czech books in the public library.

The Latin division is represented in Louisiana, while outside the borders of the United States there is a rich field in Canada.

The great point is to take note of curious beliefs and stories whenever we come upon them. I have found folk-lore in a dozen States from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The following is an extract from some notes taken in Washington. An old Irish woman told me the story of Mark Flaherty.

There was a man named Mark Flaherty, who took a horse to pasture one evening after sunset. He drove to the middle of the field, and while taking the bridle from the horse's head felt the presence of some one behind, just near his shoulder, and heard a voice calling to him. The moment he let the horse go, he turned to see who was speaking. No one! Mark was astonished, for the field was smooth,

not a clump of bushes nor a stone in it from one end to the other. There was no hiding-place, yet not a soul was to be seen. The "owner of the voice" had disappeared as if the ground had swallowed him.

After waiting a moment, Mark turned to go home, but with the first step he heard a great noise, as if from the flapping of sails and the whistling of wind through the rigging of a great ship in a storm. Mark looked around on every side; there was n't a living creature in the field barring the horse and himself. The noise was from an unseen power.

Filled with terror, and thinking that his last hour had come, he hurried home, but the noise continued till he entered the house. Mark could hardly breathe; he went to bed but could not sleep, something oppressed him with a weight like that of a heavy man, but no man was there. All night he lay awake, covered with a cold sweat, and in mortal terror from some enemy near at hand.

Next morning his hair was perfectly white, though brown the day before. After that evening in the pasture, whenever Mark was out of doors after sunset, he always heard a voice, and saw a man stealing after him, but when he turned straight on this man he disappeared.

Mark was so troubled by this, that he stopped going out after sunset; he lost his health, and soon was nothing but skin and bone. At the end of three years, when Mark was at death's door, an old beggar came to his house, and said:—

"You must go to the bees, and get honey, enough to anoint yourself from the crown of your head to the sole of your feet. You must leave no part untouched, and you must rub it in well. You must get the first honey of young bees, and get it yourself, for it will not have the power if another gets it for you. The bees go to every flower in the world, and take the good that is in it out of it, and the honey has the virtue of them all; it will cure you and bring back the color to your hair and your face."

Mark got the honey, and spent all one evening in rubbing himself carefully from head to foot, leaving no part untouched. Next morning he was as well as ever, and his hair as brown as it was on the evening he drove the horse to pasture.

Mark heard no more voices, and was never again dogged by the twilight spy.

The woman who told this story declared that she knew Mark Flaherty before the evening of the voice, when his hair was brown; saw him a couple of days later, when it was white; and again after the honey cure when it was brown a second time.

I told the story of Mark Flaherty to an old man of Capitol Hill,

Washington, who listened attentively and with apparent interest but on hearing the conclusion said he could not believe it. He comforted me, however, by saying that he could tell of something which really took place in his own neighborhood at home (in Ireland).

One of his acquaintances died and was buried on the following Sunday. While the funeral procession was on the way to the churchyard two of the mourners, both friends of the narrator, saw the ghost of the dead man playing ball in a field by the wayside. They said nothing at the time but followed on and saw the coffin lowered and covered up in the ground. When the funeral was over they told what they had seen. On the following Sunday the two who had seen the dead man playing ball were buried themselves.

Even in New England curious and interesting material may be found among old people descended from the English colonial settlers. About five years ago an old lady told me that fifty-five years before our conversation the heart of a man was burned on Woodstock Green, Vermont. The man had died of consumption six months before and his body buried in the ground. A brother of the deceased fell ill soon after, and in a short time it appeared that he too had consumption; when this became known the family determined at once to disinter the body of the dead man and examine his heart. They did so, found the heart undecayed, and containing liquid blood. Then they reinterred the body, took the heart to the middle of Woodstock Green, where they kindled a fire under an iron pot, in which they placed the heart, and burned it to ashes.

The old lady who told me this was living in Woodstock at the time, and said she saw the disinterment and the burning with her own eyes.

The same old lady said that her uncle, a physician of good standing and repute, was present, with other physicians, at the opening of a grave in the town of Malone, New York. The reason of the opening was as follows: A "bone auger" had been observed making its way through one of the grave mounds in the church-yard, increasing in height day by day. At length it was determined to dig down and trace this auger to its origin. They dug through the earth to the coffin below, the auger had bored its way through the coffin lid. The lid was removed, and the people found that the "bone auger" was growing out of the heart of a man buried some time before.

These two cases are remarkable enough. The first is a peculiar kind of vampirism quite worthy of some Oriental country. The old lady informed me that the belief was quite common when she was a girl, about seventy-five years ago, that if a person died of consumption and one of the family, that is, a brother or sister, or the father

or mother, was attacked soon after, people thought the attack came from the deceased. They opened the grave at once and examined the heart ; if bloodless and decaying, the disease was supposed to be from some other cause, and the heart was restored to its body ; but if the heart was fresh and contained liquid blood, it was feeding on the life of the sick person. In all such cases they burned the heart to ashes in a pot, as on Woodstock Green.

Jeremiah Curtin.

WASHINGTON, D. C.